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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ADDIS ABABA 000342

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: USAU: SOMALIA MINISTERIAL TURNS HEATED

REF: NAIROBI 191

Classified By: USAU Ambassador Michael A. Battle, reasons 1.4 (b, d).

This message is from USAU Ambassador Michael A. Battle.

¶1. (SBU) Summary: A regular meeting of AMISOM troop-contributing countries (TCCs) is fraught with recriminations and increased frustration, particularly on the part of the Somali Minister of Defense. Ethiopia announces what appears to be a landmark diplomatic breakthrough that would bring Alhus Sunnah wal Jamaah (ASWJ) into the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) fold, integrating fighting forces and sharing regional administration. The agreement is expected by month's end. Senior military officials warn of al-Shabaab preparations for a USS Cole-type attack aimed at shutting down operations in the Port of Mogadishu and worry about 9/11-type threats against AMISOM. The Force Commander repeated requests for maritime interdiction assets, passenger screening technology for the Mogadishu Airport, air defense radar, attack helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicles, and technical assistance in developing and executing a media campaign. The United Nations asks prospective donors to get off the fence and help create a "fragile government from a failed state," warning the international community that this missed opportunity could condemn Somalia to a future that is frighteningly similar to its recent past. End Summary.

Detente

¶2. (SBU) At the monthly ministerial meeting on the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Ethiopian Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Tekeda Alemu made a rare appearance to brief Ministers of Defense from troop-contributing countries, the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, and partners on a recent diplomatic breakthrough. Tekeda reported that the government of Ethiopia (GOE) had recently facilitated a watershed agreement between the TFG and ASWJ in which the two parties agreed to coordinate their activities, integrate their security forces, and share regional administrative duties on the basis of the TFG's charter and the Djibouti Process. TFG and ASWJ negotiators agreed to continue reconciliation efforts with all parties seeking peace in Somalia in order to broaden the TFG's base. They also agreed to establish a National Advisory Council of Ulema

(Muslim scholars) with the objective of preserving Somali religion. Tekeda added the caveat that while the two parties had agreed to cooperate while in Addis Ababa, neither had signed the agreement, each having to return to their respective constituencies for final approval. Tekeda anticipated formal signature before the end of February, and appealed to the international community to support this process. (Comment: While Tekeda probably understated Ethiopia's role in brokering the February 13 agreement, not everyone is as optimistic about its chances for success. The ASWJ is not monolithic, and its representatives at the Addis talks may not represent all ASWJ factions. End Comment.)

Maritime Insecurity

¶3. (C) AMISOM Force Commander, Major General Nathan Mugisha, reported a looming maritime threat that demands immediate international attention. AMISOM has proof that al-Shabaab is preparing at least two small boats with explosives to conduct a USS Cole-type attack with the aim of rendering the Port of Mogadishu unusable by large resupply vessels. Mugisha reminded the assembly that AMISOM's maritime assets were in poor repair and not up to the task of harbor protection, much less escorting ships for the final five vulnerable miles to port. Per Mugisha, the Somali Coast Guard also has capable mariners, but absolutely no functioning vessels. Mugisha expressed frustration that this shortcoming has been debated for a year, with international promises of assistance but no fulfillment of the pledges. In response, the United Nations Support Office for AMISOM (UNSOA) representative reminded the

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audience that certain AU member states possess maritime surveillance assets and encouraged collective diplomatic pressure on these states to make those assets available to AMISOM.

Death From Above

¶4. (SBU) Mugisha also elucidated an aerial threat. AMISOM, he said, has air defense guns but no capability to detect approaching aircraft. He asked not only for radar, but also for unmanned aerial vehicles to assist with force protection and aerial surveillance. Mugisha also appealed for basic airport security equipment to screen passengers, alluding to 9/11 type threats to his headquarters.

Still Losing the Propaganda War

¶5. (SBU) Despite now having three radio broadcast stations, Mugisha lamented that only the TFG-controlled station was operational. Even the TFG's radio, he implied, is not effective because of a lack of technical capacity to prepare and deliver timely messages designed to divide the enemy and tout the successes of the TFG and AMISOM. (Note: In the past year, the USG and the UN have both provided hardware and limited training for two radio stations in addition to the TFG-owned radio. However, sources told USAU separately that politics and an inept public information officer within the office of the Special Representative for the Chairperson of the Commission (SRCC) are preventing the radios from going on the air. UNSOA has the authority and money set aside for technical assistance and messaging, but is lacking only a signature from the SRCC.)

¶6. (SBU) Mugisha stated that his forces are constantly accused of disproportionate response and collateral damage in the extremist-dominated media. AMISOM needs help in operationalizing its radio and develop its media campaign, said Mugisha.

¶7. (SBU) Somali Defense Minister Abdulla Boss Ahmed amplified Mugisha's frustration with the worn-out promises of the international community and the incessant debates at the AU. He directed most of his anger at the AU and the European Union (EU), blasting partners for failing to make good on the majority of promises made at the March Pledging Conference in Brussels, and then blaming the AU for holding up transfer of the pittance that had been paid. The security sector, said Boss, is the most important sector. None of the international community's other initiatives will succeed in Somalia without a foundation of security. How is it that only about \$3 million of the pledged \$38 million has been received by the TFG?

¶8. (SBU) Boss claimed to have 9,980 "former TFG" troops under arms in Mogadishu, as well as 2,000 ASWJ fighters loyal to the TFG. Only 5,000 of these troops receive stipends, however. Boss warned of impending mutiny if the international community continues to pay only a fraction of the Somali National Forces (SNF). Boss also appealed for international assistance for Ogadeni fighters staging in Kenya. He indicated that it would be beneficial to open a second front with these fighters, but that they lack equipment and ammunition.

¶9. (SBU) Boss, as well as the UN Deputy Special Representative for the Secretary General (SRSG), made it clear that any future training of SNF is predicated on one year's post-training salary. Boss stated that he would not even allow Somali trainees to be selected and transported to Uganda unless the EU could guarantee pay for their graduates. Training without salary is simply throwing fuel on the fire, said Boss.

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Burundian MoD Weighs In

¶10. (SBU) Burundian Minister of Defense Germain Niyoyankana expressed similar frustration as Boss, albeit in a more diplomatic fashion. The situation in Somalia is worsening daily, he said. "We say the same things at every meeting. We make resolutions, yet nothing changes," he said. Meanwhile, the enemy is getting stronger and its influence is growing. Niyoyankana spoke of a recent television spot on France 24 in which al-Shabaab paraded vehicles in broad daylight. The column included armored vehicles, he said, reminding the audience of the adverse psychological impact such a brazen display can have on the Somali populace. Some of our stronger partners ought to be able to strike such a convoy, said Germain looking at the U.S. delegation. Alternatively, the international community should provide AMISOM with attack helicopters to interdict al-Shabaab convoys. This appeal for attack helicopters was echoed by the Deputy SRSG.

¶11. (SBU) Niyoyankana also appealed for UN equivalent stipends for AMISOM peacekeepers, in an effort to attract new TCCs. He asked UNSOA to consider direct flights from Bujumbura to Mogadishu to avoid Burundian personnel getting stranded at Entebbe. Niyoyankana asked Peace and Security Commissioner Lamamra for a long-overdue update on the status of the AU's inquiry into the March 2009 crash of the Ilyushin IL-76, stating the outcome was holding up payment of the death benefits to the families of the three Burundian troops who perished. Finally, Niyoyankana questioned rhetorically who really owns the USG-procured equipment, suggesting that it was unclear whether the donated equipment really belongs to Burundi or is merely a loan for the peace operation.

Uganda's Complaints

¶12. (SBU) Ugandan Minister of State for Defense Jeje Odongo reiterated pleas for UN reimbursement for lethal equipment owned by TCCs. He also asked for more lethal equipment donations for AMISOM troops. Odongo put the UN on the spot for a response to a long-standing IGAD request for a naval blockade and no-fly zone to disrupt al-Shabaab resupply efforts. (Note: In May 2009, the AU endorsed an IGAD request for a UN naval blockade on the ports of Kismayo and Merka, as well as no-fly zones in the vicinities of airports at KM50, KM90, Balidogle, Waajid, Hudur, Isaley, Johwar, and the Gedo Region.)

UNSOA's Appeal

¶13. (SBU) Deputy SRSG Charles Petrie reported that the TFG has survived a year despite minimal outside assistance, and has emerged stronger for its effort. He explained that the TFG provided direction at the December 2009 International Contact Group in Jeddah, and that its leadership there had resulted in the February 2010 breakthrough with the ASWJ. This success may entice skeptical potential donors to get off the fence and help create a "fragile government from a failed state." He implored the international community not to miss this opportunity. Otherwise, the future of Somalia is condemned to look like it has for the past 20 years.

Comment

¶14. (C) USAU notes the rare, perhaps unprecedented, appearance of Ethiopian Vice Minister Tekeda at the regular meeting of AMISOM TCCs, as well as his doubtful claims of Ethiopia's understated role in brokering the agreement between the TFG and ASWJ. Perhaps more significant, however, was the shift in tone by some of the more regular attendees. USAU has never seen Somali Minister of Defense Boss so visibly frustrated, to the point that he lost his diplomatic decorum. The Burundian and Ugandan Ministers were more

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diplomatic, but also expressed unusual frustration, calling into account both the AU and the UN for bureaucratic snafus and unanswered requests.

¶15. (C) Shortcomings noted by Mugisha provide opportunities for USG assistance. The Department of Homeland Security, in conjunction with the regionally-based Offices of Regional Affairs, could respond to Mugisha's demand to improve airport security with basic equipment like magnetometers, x-ray machines, and explosive detection screening systems. They might also take advantage of this request to include Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System (PISCES) in the security upgrade package for Mogadishu Airport to capture immigration data and assist in terrorist interdiction. Sources tell USAU that the Mogadishu Airport manager would be amenable to security upgrades.

¶16. (C) Another opportunity raised by Mugisha's complaints of extremist-dominated media might be to use funding and authorities resident in the Nairobi-based military information support team (MIST) to assist the AMISOM and the SRCC's office with messaging, website improvement, durable messaging goods, and possibly exploiting SMS text messaging support of AMISOM information operations. USAU also notes that internal political wrangling under the previous SRCC may still be affecting UN support to AMISOM information operations. UN sources tell USAU that they require only the SRCC's signature on a MOU before they can unleash millions of dollars of support that would provide technical specialists to develop and produce media messaging from a remote site in Nairobi.

YATES